In treating the class made up of officials and officers, certain things from the initial discussion in this section may be seen. The first of these are the religious and ethnic divisions. Calling to mind the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, a number of Christians are to be found in the official class in Rowandus, for example, the postmaster and several of the teachers. Because of their religion, these men are at some disadvantage among their colleagues. At a gathering to which one or more Christians have been invited, they may be embarrassed whenever religious matters are discussed and are generally limited in the forcefulness of their words, for they are unable to argue with the fluency of expression permissable between fellow Muslims. A Christian teacher cannot castigate his pupils with the freedom of some other, often to his chagrin, for the students are aware of his social inferiority. Similarly, an occurrence of the distinction between Sunnite and Shiite in this class has been noticed. Of greater importance, however, is the division along national lines between the government class and the two other groups to be found in the town. Both the landed aristocracy and the townspeople are ethnically homogeneous, while the official class is diverse in its members, made up of Arabs, Kurds, and Turks, with the first group providing the greatest numbers. The Turks are little troubled, but a Kurdish civil servant must be circumspect in his conduct and exercise some care that he does not exhibit what might be interpreted as revolutionary sentiments or behavior.

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21: Fisher S-4 (no date) 1950 M1 Middle East Kurd MA 11

PRESENT POLITICAL GROUPING

M 343

It has largely been inevitable that the present national frontiers, drawn in lands where sectarian and social divisions are strong, and where political consciousness is merely in the first stage of development, should in some instances give incomplete realisation to the political needs and aspirations of Middle Eastern peoples. Although it is probably impossible to devise frontiers which would be even moderately satisfactory in this respect, present boundaries offer a number of outstanding difficulties. Palestine is a problem on its own, but in addition three other communities—the Kurds, the Armenians, and the Assyrian Christians—find themselves without a political future, and present special problems to the national governments of the various states in which they live.

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The Kurds are a semi-nomadic pastoral people, living in the highlands of eastern Anatolia and the north-western Zagros. Transhumance between summer pastures on the higher mountain slopes, and winter quarters in the valleys and lowlands (sometimes involving movement between widely separated districts), has brought the Kurds into conflict with the four national governments, because their homeland is now divided among Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq. It has been said of this people that they have claims to racial purity and to continuity of culture that are stronger than those of any European nation, since the Kurds have been settled in their present home since about 2400 B.C.; but the term 'culture' must be taken in a limited sense, for the Kurds are renowned as a fierce and predatory people, and their social organisation has not progressed beyond the level of tribal grouping. Their occupation of eastern Anatolia and the northern Zagros has given them command of a number of important trade-routes, from which they have derived considerable revenue by means of heavy exactions on trading caravans. The Kurds have the reputation of being pre-eminently a people that it is unsafe to trifle with, and their tendency to shoot on sight at moving objects has kept outside interference to a minimum.[1] Even the Ottoman Turks could do little to subjugate them, and they remained free from Turkish taxation and military conscription.

K 798

The Kurds were, however, employed by the Turks as agents in persecuting Christian minorities—chiefly the Armenians. The Kurds

[1] This is the verdict of a succession of travellers in the region, from Alexander the Great and Xenophon to Marco Polo and the Peace Treaty Commission of 1919.

21: Fisher 8-4 (no date) 1950 M1 Middle East
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778 claim the right of wintering in the Christian villages of Armenia, and, as fanatical Moslems, they indulged on occasion in massacres of their unwilling Christian hosts—this often with the connivance or tacit approval of the Turks, who were not reluctant to see the Christian communities of Asia Minor decrease in numbers.

161 For obvious reasons, detailed figures as to the number of the Kurds are not available,[1] but estimates, some of them much out of date, give a total of some 3 millions, distributed as follows:

Turkey	1,250,000
Iraq (1924)	494,000
Iran	700,000
Baluchistan	350,000
Transcaucasian Russia (1921)	125,000
Syria	100,000
Afghanistan	20,000

619 The Kurds cannot be said to have any advanced political feeling,
186 and, even less than the Badawin Arabs, have rarely been able to com-
648 bine for long in a stable, large-scale political organization. Individual-ism and local tribal feeling are the chief characteristics. Kurdish political activity has been negative: that is, strongly against any other group that has tried to rule them, and their predilection tends to be anti-governmental, whatever the composition of the latter may be, rather than for pro-Kurdish aims. Since 1923 there have been ten serious revolts by the Kurds against various national governments—two against Turkey, four in Iran, and four in Iraq. One of these, in 1947, made use of weapons looted from Iranian military dépots. Such revolts lend themselves to intervention by outside powers; and an American view[2] is that a Kurdish revolt against Iran in 1942 had tacit support from Russia, with the aim of embarrassing the Iranian government. Little was finally achieved, however: one factor may have been the importance at the time of American lease-lend supplies to Russia, as the result of which the U.S. was able to exert some moderating influence on Russian policy.

648 Since 1927, a Kurdish independence movement, the 'Khoibun', has been in existence, but its activities have hitherto had little success, the main obstacle being jealousy, division, and lack of co-operation
000 among the Kurds themselves. An attempt was made to enlist

[1] In modern Turkish statistics the Kurds are described as 'Mountain Turks'.
[2] That of Professor W. L. Westermann.